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## Heaven In A Hollow Earth: The Shaker-Koreshan Connection

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## Heaven In A Hollow Earth: The Shaker-Koreshan Connection

### Cover Page Footnote

This article is based on a presentation given at the Communal Studies conference, Estero, Fla., in September 2008. I would like to thank Steve Paterwic, Jerry Grant, Glendyne Wergland, Peter Hoehnle, and especially Brother Arnold Hadd, Lenny Brooks, and Tina Agren, for help in gathering the research materials for this article.

## **Heaven In A Hollow Earth: The Shaker-Koreshan Connection**

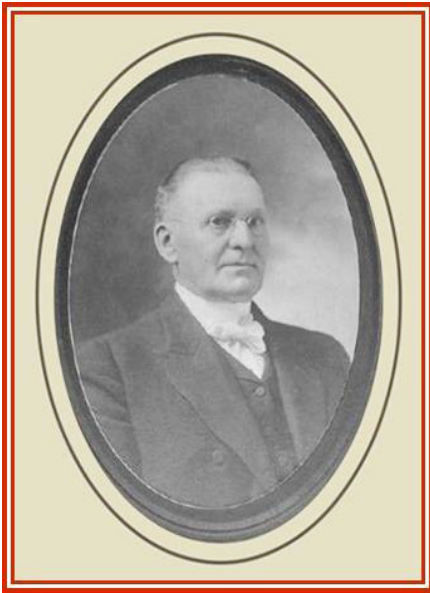
*By Christian Goodwillie*

Throughout the history of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing the sect has welcomed interaction with other communal societies. Dialogue with the Harmony Society at each of its three locations—the Inspirationists at Ebenezer, New York and Amana, Iowa; the Separatists at Zoar, Ohio; the Bishop Hill Colony in Bishop Hill, Illinois; the Perfectionists at Oneida, New York; and even the short-lived Transcendentalists at Fruitlands, exposed the Believers to other belief systems and lifestyles.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, though, these relationships created problems that neither participant foresaw.

The late-nineteenth-century Shakers' progressive nature enabled them to discuss their theology in an open manner that allowed for outside perspectives regarding all but a handful of core Shaker principles—celibacy, confession of sins, and community of goods. This openness to new ideas was exercised to perhaps its breaking point in the Shakers' interaction with Dr. Cyrus Reed Teed. The Shakers may have discussed their theology at a deeper level with the Koreshan leader than with any other outsider, particularly one who was bent on changing their core beliefs. By comparison, read the accounts of the chilly reception afforded early Latter Day Saints missionaries at North Union, Ohio in the 1830s.<sup>2</sup> That the Shaker-Koreshan dialogue went as far as it did had everything to do with the fact that Teed dealt mainly with the ultra-progressive North Family at Mount Lebanon, New York. Elders Frederick W. Evans and Daniel Offord were notable within the Shaker movement for their embrace of many radical causes, and were considered by other Shaker communities, and even other families within their own community, to be “the goody, goody North family.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Teed could not have found a more welcoming reception than he did at the North Family.

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Cyrus R. Teed (1839-1900)

Cyrus Reed Teed was born on October 18, 1839 in Delaware County, New York. He grew up in Utica, New York, and studied medicine with his uncle Samuel Teed. During the Civil War he served in a Union Army field hospital, and in 1868 he established his own medical practice in Utica. In 1869 Teed experienced a visitation from a spirit in the form of a beautiful woman who told him that he was to “redeem the race,” and that through his work “the Sons of God shall spring into visible creation.” By the late 1880s Teed had established a community of followers in Chicago known as Koreshan Unity.<sup>4</sup>

To fully understand and contextualize the relationship between Koreshan Unity and the Shakers it is useful to examine Teed’s dealings with the Harmony Society at Economy, Pennsylvania. Teed’s first published work was a newspaper entitled *The Herald or the Messenger of the New Covenant* issued in 1877 from Utica, New York. In an 1880 “Supplement” to this periodical, Teed published an article on “The Present and Immediate Future of the Harmony Society at Economy, Pa.,” wherein he offered a candid assessment, from his unique point of view, of the potential for regenerating that communal society. A few excerpts from this article encapsulate Teed’s perspective:

The present status of the society is that of an old man, who, having entered upon a superior phase of natural existence, and who having shut himself out of a hope for posterity and heirship to his domain through the propagative instinct and tendency, naturally looks for the fulfillment of his hopes in an heir to whom he may transmit a heritage....

Harmony at Economy is the ingestive centre of the new body. It will be the first to receive the Lord of the seven genera, or the seven churches, which shall comprise the new body. The first great gathering of the people shall be at Harmony. There shall be heard the thunders of Sinai; there the first great sound of the trump of God; and there shall the

elect of God begin to gather.<sup>5</sup>

From these passages it seems that Teed was fishing for some sort of tangible, perhaps legal, relationship between himself and the Harmony Society. His reference to an “heir to whom he may transmit a heritage” is the first overture I have located from Teed to the Harmony Society proposing some sort of merger. Teed’s effusive praise of the Harmony Society as “the ingestive centre of the new body” attempts by flattery to prepare the way for his infiltration and co-option of the group for his own purposes. This is clear in his concluding statement that “there [Economy] shall the elect of God begin to gather.” By these words Teed ignored Father



Annie G. Ordway, consort of  
Cyrus R. Teed

George Rapp’s already extant conception of the Harmonists as an elect people, or showed his belief that Rapp’s view was groundless. In either case Teed was theoretically restructuring Harmonist beliefs to suit his own ends.

Former Shaker DeRobigne M. Bennett was aware early on of Teed’s religious pretensions and his fledgling newspaper. Bennett had apostatized from the community at New Lebanon, New York, on September 11, 1846. By the late 1870s he was a noted advocate of the social reform movement, and he edited the liberal periodical *The Truth Seeker*. In 1879 Bennett wrote to his former brethren at Mount Lebanon and his brief letter was published in the Shakers’ monthly periodical *The Manifesto*:

We have received a small paper called *The Herald or the Messenger of the New Covenant*, edited by our friend, and opponent, Cyrus Romulus R. Teed. It appears to be designed to prepare the public mind for a grand step forward of the human race in recognition of the principles of community life and celibacy. Would it not be well for Mr. Teed to join the Shakers? They believe in community of interest, a life of celibacy, and in prophecy.

Why should he not become one of them? — *Truth Seeker*.<sup>6</sup>

Bennett accurately recognized the significant overlap between Teed and the Shakers when it came to the practices of celibacy and community of goods. If it had not yet occurred to Teed that the Shakers might be worthy allies, or unwitting dupes, for his plans, then this very notice may have planted the seed that led to their subsequent involvement. It would be another eleven years, however, before Teed actively began to court the Shakers to consummate the planned union of the two groups.

Meanwhile, Teed continued his attempt to insinuate himself into the Harmony Society. The full story behind Teed's relations with them has yet to be written. Harmonist scholar Karl J. R. Arndt states that Teed first wrote to the Harmony Society in 1880, and that Harmony trustee Jacob Henrici considered the Koreshan Unity as one possible heir for some, or perhaps all, of the Society's assets (the others being Topolobampo and Olombia). By the early 1890s Teed's connection to Harmony Society trustee John S. Duss was receiving negative attention in the press. Duss was appointed trustee on July 26, 1890, although he had been a member only since January 24th of that year; whereupon longtime member and descendant of one of the founders Dr. Benjamin Feucht brought a lawsuit against the Society. This lawsuit named Cyrus Reed Teed as a co-defendant.<sup>7</sup> The local press picked up the news of the conflict, forcing a response from Henrici, as well as from Teed.

Feucht was not the only one with doubts about Teed. Subsequently, a letter written on November 14, 1891, to Jacob Henrici from Theo L. Pitt of Niagara Falls Center, Canada, attempted to warn Henrici of Teed's questionable past. Pitt urged Henrici, "Before you trust Cyrus R. Teed, before you believe his pretensions, before you give the right-hand of fellowship, before you indorse his schemes, or admit him to any association with you, I beg of you to search out his personal history." After detailing Teed's abandonment of his wife and child, and the fact that his neighbors considered him to be insane, Pitt concluded, "He was then, as I believe him to be now, a great religious and spiritual pretender, and seeker after notoriety."<sup>8</sup>

Although the purpose of this article is not to examine the Harmonist-Koreshan relationship in depth, the details of Teed's dealing with Henrici and Duss certainly illuminate his subsequent dealings with the Shakers. The Koreshan newspaper *The Flaming Sword* for January 16, 1892, contains an article entitled "Economy and Dr. Teed" written by Koresh (Teed) himself.

The article admits that Teed sent “some of his people there [Economy] on the ground of employment and probation, to be accepted into the society on the identical basis of the acceptance of all other candidates for admission.” After tweaking the Pittsburg press for prying into the private affairs of the Koreshans and Harmonists, Teed categorically denies that he has made any attempt to infiltrate the Harmony Society.

A few weeks since, the press informed the country that Dr. Teed had gobbled the millions of the Economites; now, it as positively states that Dr. Teed did not so gobble. The press made a mistake, it says. Has it made a mistake this time? Who can tell? Not the press, certainly!... At Economy, Pa., there is a disaffected membership who would have been the natural heirs of the first wealthy contributors to the Economy fund. They would like a division of the property, and they are the ones who do not wish to see the institution prosper, as a community, and who are opposed to any additional membership. Should Dr. Teed send members there, they would remain on probation a year at least, so that any vote of the Board of Elders to not admit new members for a year, could not in any way affect the agreement between the Dr. and the Board of Elders. — Koresh.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps Teed protested too much. Even his own article begs the question why a messianic prophet such as Teed would willingly send away some of his own followers to join another unrelated communal society. The answer would become clear in time.

Meanwhile Teed had visited the Shakers at Mount Lebanon, New York, arriving on December 10, 1891. The North Family’s “Book of Records” recorded the following for that day:

Cyrus R. Teed—Koresh Leader—comes. He corresponded with us many years ago. Got Faith. But like Paul he comes up to Jerusalem to test his walk. Has five or six Communities. Have faith in duality of Deity, in Celibacy, in Community, and non resistance—all Shaker. Cyrus unites as a Believer. And goes to gather his people. He is an [?]. Have meeting with him, speaks two hours. Goes to the Church and has a Society Meeting. Give him [\$]35 00 contributed by different families.”<sup>10</sup> During the course of his visit Teed also spoke at the Church Family: “Sun 13 We have C.R. Teed from Chicago give his Experience this P.M. at the Chh. meeting room Family in the Village and Canaan are represented [S+c?] has been starting a community there and several other places in the land on Celebate principles unity of goods and spirits May success attend their labours.”<sup>11</sup>

Teed's lectures at the North and Church Families made quite an impression on the Shakers in attendance. The substance of his remarks was published in the March 1892 issue of *The Manifesto*. Of the first lecture the anonymous Shaker author wrote: "If our minds had been biased by slanderous newspaper reports, the Docter [*sic*] would have been an unwelcome guest; but, knowing from experience that false representation and defamation of character is the portion of those who deviate from the common course of the world, we were disposed to give the stranger-friend a fair hearing, and were favorably impressed with his honesty and sincerity of purpose from the first interview." His talk was recounted as follows: "At first he showed some embarrassment, but soon warmed up to his subject, and spoke most eloquently for an hour and a half on the faith and principles of the new order. His views in most respects coincided with those of our Society. He believes in the Duality of Deity ... but preferred the term Bi-unity, as meaning two in one. There was one God including Father and Mother; one Christ embodying the masculine and feminine principles, revealed through Jesus and Ann Lee." The author further stated: "He dated his spiritual illumination back to eighteen hundred and seventy, just one hundred years after Ann Lee received her divine revelation; and he claimed, that the light and truth emanating from this Society, had a potent influence on his baptism." The writer explains that Teed had recently visited the Harmony Society, and that he had a plan to establish a "friendly intercourse" between celibate communal societies that would achieve a cessation of the use of money.<sup>12</sup>

The lecture delivered to the assembled families of Mount Lebanon in the meeting room of the Church Family dwelling further elucidated some of Teed's new ideas. The Shaker writer refers to Teed as "our friend and brother." Apparently, sometime between his Thursday arrival and Sunday lecture Teed had "simply accepted our rule of initiation into the order, that of confession of sin, and felt strengthened in a spiritual union with the body of Christ." His membership status among the Shakers is unclear, as there is no evidence that he ever signed a Shaker covenant.<sup>13</sup> The elders of the North Family would come to regret Teed's pseudo-membership in the Society, and eventually attempted to redefine it. Sunday afternoon's lecture began with an exposition of occult topics, Teed's knowledge of which impressed the anonymous Shaker journalist. Teed also recounted his life story—his Baptist upbringing, conversion, and the founding of Koreshan Unity in Chicago, Illinois. The Shaker chronicling the event



drew a favorable impression of the Koreshans, and also their respect for the work of Shakerism. "Though their discipline and form of worship was different from ours, yet the same spirit of truth was working in them for purification and redemption from the sins of the world. The life work of Mother Ann Lee was highly eulogized, her mission was recognized as the one great good that had brought women to releasement from the thralldom of sexuality, and placed her in the spiritual kingdom on an equality with her brother man."<sup>14</sup> Teed's first visit at Mount Lebanon was an unqualified success.

Koreshan Unity's newspaper *The Flaming Sword* was launched on January 2, 1892. In the very first issue a brief article appeared entitled, "Source and Fountain of the Potency Upon Which Depends the Organization of Coming Kingdom." This article was a laud to Shakerism, and one cannot help but wonder if it was a carefully calculated effort by Teed lay the groundwork in preparing the Shakers for his future plans.

The world is about ripe for the great harvest of the Christian age. The old church and state, divorced because of their adulterous and prostitute relations, are about to pass away. This is the removal of the old heavens and old earth. There will be a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, a new church and a new state. This new kingdom of church and state will be so radically new that not a vestige of the old fabric will remain to indicate that a new piece of cloth has been put onto an old garment.

Two prime factors will comprise the essential characteristics and evidences of the fitness of survival, the indications of the legitimate and authentic kingdom. These are, first, the unmistakable confession that the coming order is the evolution of Christianity as originating in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The other is, that in these latter days, as the product of the genuine Christian order, Emanuel Swedenborg was illuminated in the spiritual "sense" of the doctrine of a new church, and that Ann Lee was specially representative of the new life, and that her influence, as one embodiment of the descent of the Messianic or Christ spirit, has been instrumental in organizing a prominent and leading division of the golden candlestick, the Christian Communists, called Shakers, comprising one branch of the candlestick—one of the seven churches, and at least one-seventh part of the power that shall direct the formulation of the ark of the covenant, the remaining hope of the world. There is a not a body on the face of the earth to-day so pronouncedly in advance of progress in the practical application of and life of what goes to make up the progressive considerations of the coming revolution, in

religious life, social relation, political and organic unity, state polity and commercial integrity, as the body of people called Shakers.

Ann Lee, the woman who had sufficient vital power to organize and perpetuate such a body of Christian believers and celibate communists as the Shaker body, throughout the world, is entitled to the honor given by the highest civilization, for she has made it possible for the world to come into the immortal life for which the age has groaned. We regard Swedenborg and Ann Lee as the stamen and pistil of that blossom which precedes the fruitage of the age, and their union in the spiritual world, as the marriage of the Bride and Lamb, through which the heavens are opened, and the rider on the white horse made visible and potential. — Koresh.<sup>15</sup>

The rider on the white horse referred to at the close of the article is none other than Teed himself. This is the earliest reference (if only metaphorical) I have located to Teed's goal of uniting the Koreshans and the Shakers. In retrospect it is incredible how quickly he achieved this goal. In the same issue of *The Flaming Sword* the Koreshans printed radical Shaker elder Frederick W. Evans's article "Closing the Fair," which argued against closing the Chicago World's Fair on Sundays for the sake of a few Christian denominations. Teed would prove to be quite shrewd in using print media to further his aspirations for a merger, both spiritual and financial, of the Shakers and Koreshans.

*The Flaming Sword* for January 23, 1892, published another article aimed at Shaker readership entitled "God the Lord Alternately Male and Female: The Sons of God, Neuter." This explication of Koreshan theology stated, "The masculine and feminine in God are equal," a point with which Shakers would have agreed.

Dualism is not the supreme expression of the Deific personality. Counterpartal relation, in the forms of separate male and female entities, does not express the plenum of Deific function and the attitude of creative origin and destiny. God is biune—two-in-one—not dual, two in two. Two entities, male and female, however high as existing in distinctive male and female forms, cannot represent the *acme* of source and resource. The supreme or highest stage of human dualism, and the condition prior to the biunity of our manhood, the stage of existence which must comprise the threshold of the great temple of life, to be reconstructed from the *debris* of generations, is the separation of sex within the boundaries of communistic and celibate groupings. No higher attainment has ever yet been made toward the final reunity, in one, of male and female, that the achievement of the so-called Shaker societies founded by Ann

Lee, who comprised, in her form and office, one embodiment of the progressive personality who shall yet stand forth enfolded, the incarnate Motherhood, the resurrected Eve, the Virgin Mother of our Lord. This body of Christian communists, for more than a hundred years standing in the integrity of purpose, in the breach of the fortress of immortality, comprises the opened two-leaved gates by which the entrance is made to the citadel of eternal life; and, because open to the influx of progressive spiritual energies of exploitation, is about to take the second great step toward the fulfillment of consummate achievement.

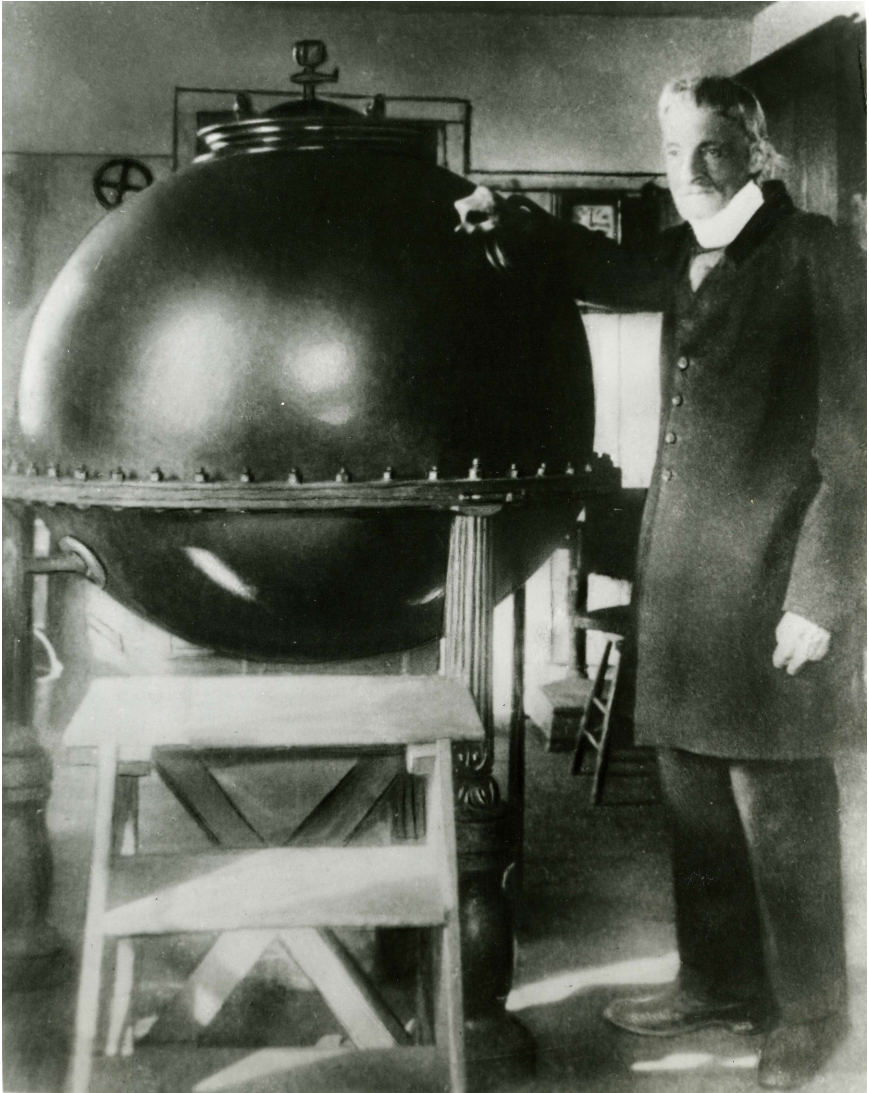
The world is converging to the apex of its revolutionary force. The vortex of potential energy is reached, and the possibility of the Lord's manifestation in the still, small voice, beyond the whirlwind of desolation, is made attainable by the conservation of the substance of life through Shaker preparation. Out of the Shaker potentiality has emerged the precursor of the kingdom of righteousness—the man-child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron—and the Shaker body itself, after having opened the doors for the intercommunication of the spheres, shall enter the second phase of its career and pass into the conjunctive aspect of its progress. 'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'—Koresh.<sup>16</sup>

As the article's argument unfolds, however it becomes clear that Teed is questioning a basic tenet of Shaker theology—that of a dual male-female Godhead—and arguing instead for his own understanding of a biune Godhead as the apotheosis, or acme, of a restored deity. He is very careful to compliment the Shakers, as well as the preparatory work of Ann Lee, but concludes by clearly outlining the impending union of the Koreshans and the Shakers—an event that Teed sees as the fulfillment of the Shakers' destiny, whether they knew it or not.

A third article entitled "The Neuter Being" appeared a week later. In this article Teed revisited his theme of the biune Godhead, and stated once again that, "Ann Lee did not fulfill her work in the manifestation of the Shaker order. A greater work than this is before her."<sup>17</sup> His intentions by this time must have been perfectly clear to the Shaker leadership at Mount Lebanon. Amazingly, his bold challenge to Shaker theology seems to have found proponents among the Shakers there. Brother Alonzo Hollister even wrote a fan letter to *The Flaming Sword* dated February 8, 1892. "Dear Brother Cyrus,... THE FLAMING SWORD is no misnomer. It justifies its name. I always read your papers through before I lay them aside.... I confess I do not comprehend Koreshan Cosmogony.... May God bless

your testimony, and may its searching rays penetrate to the utmost bounds of the inhabited world. Yours, lovingly. A.G.H.”<sup>18</sup>

Shaker trustee Benjamin Gates was sent to visit the Koreshans at their settlement on the south side of Chicago. Although I have not located a written account of his visit from either a Koreshan or Shaker source, Shaker



Alonzo Hollister standing with the Shakers' vacuum pan.  
(Collection of Hancock Shaker Village)

eldress Harriet Bullard noted his return in her journal entry of February 24, 1892: "We have a meeting to here br Benjamin [Gates] relate his visit with the Koreshans which was very satisfactory to him and interesting to hear his account of them although Cyrus Teed was not at home."<sup>19</sup> On February 26th the North Family's journal records the installation of a "Teed water Motor ... in 2d house cellar."<sup>20</sup> Teed's commercial links with the Shakers were already bearing fruit.

Meanwhile, Teed was in trouble on another front. In Pittsburg the questionable dealings between Teed and Harmony Society trustee John S. Duss were still in the news. Senior Harmony Society trustee Jacob Henrici addressed the matter in the pages of *The Flaming Sword* for March 5, 1892, in an article entitled "The Economites."

So far as any collusion between him [Teed] and Mr. Duss is concerned, looking toward a combination of the Koreshans and the Economites, why, the first we knew of it was when we read it in a newspaper. Mr. Duss, my brother trustee, I love as dearly as I would a son. You see I am getting old and feeble, and the duties of my office have been hard upon me. The welfare of the whole community depends upon the two trustees! Mr. Duss is now doing nearly all of the actual work. The duties are many and exacting, and he is discharging them to the entire satisfaction of every member of the society. The stories about him wanting to strengthen his position by getting into the society certain outsiders who are friends of his, have no foundation whatsoever. His position is now so impenetrable, as by the laws of the society he will hold it as long as he lives, that he is not in need of anybody to strengthen it.<sup>21</sup>

While Henrici and Duss reassured the Harmonists that Teed was and would always be an outsider, other sources within the Society were reporting that he had already received money from the Harmonist trustees. The managing editor of *The Flaming Sword*, Charles J. McLaughlin, inserted an excerpt from an article in *The Pittsburg Press* dated February 16, 1892. It quotes an anonymous Harmony Society member's take on the controversy: "Speaking of the affairs of the colony from a business standpoint, one of the residents of the town said: 'It is true that Mr. Henrici and Mr. Duss gave Dr. Teed a check; it is also true that a larger check was sent to the benefit fund for the Russian famine sufferers; it is true too, that no charity or good cause makes an appeal to us without getting something. But what I want to say, is, that the trustees have a perfect right to do this and no one can object.'"<sup>22</sup> Teed was clearly winning the public relations battle, as these articles show his motivations were considered above reproach by Henrici

and even a rank-and-file member of the Society.

*The Flaming Sword* continued to publish contributions from such Shakers as Elders Henry C. Blinn and Frederick Evans between March and May of 1892. The way had been carefully prepared for the visit of two important Koreshan women to Mount Lebanon. The North Family's journal records the following for June 28th: "Anna Ordway and Mrs Andrews Known as Victoria and Virginia of the Koreshan Unity of Chicago arrive will stay some little time." The same journal records their departure on July 6th after a "very satisfactory visit."<sup>23</sup> This is a rather remarkable understatement given what transpired while Ordway and Andrews were at Mount Lebanon. A certificate, apparently drawn up by Teed and delivered by Ordway, was signed and sealed by the elders and eldresses of the North Family. It was published in the October 1892 issue of *The Manifesto*:

Office of the Guiding Star Publishing House  
3619 Cottage Grove Avenue, Chicago  
June 26th. 1892.

Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. July 3, 1892

Certificate of Confirmation of the election of Victoria Gratia (Mrs. Annie G. Ordway) to the Presiding Office of the Gynecato of the Koreshan Unity.

We hereby declare our confirmation of the acceptance of Victoria, into our body as a member of the North Family of Shakers at Mount Lebanon, N.Y., and our approval of her election to the office, Shepherdess of the Gynecato of the Koreshan Unity, and we do hereby commission her to Publish the Gospel of Sexual Holiness, as ordained in the body of Christian Believers, called Shakers, and as in the same manner taught by the Koreshan Unity.

In approval of her appointment, election and ratification to her appointment we ordain by the affixing of our signatures

In	Frederick W. Evans
Witness	Daniel Offord
	Anna White
	Martha J. Anderson <sup>24</sup>

This bizarre proclamation, containing novel titles and referring to a nebulous "Gospel of Sexual Holiness" served to conflate Teed's own ideas and teachings with those of the Shakers. One must assume that the Central Ministry at Mount Lebanon was consulted in this matter, but I have not discovered any evidence one way or the other. This was the first of a series



June 29-1892  
A.R. 53  
Annie G. Ordway.  
Beth Ophrah  
Koreshan Unity  
Washington Heights  
Ill.

2  
June 29<sup>th</sup>  
1892  
A.R. 53  
Virginia H. Andrews.  
Beth Ophrah  
Washington Heights.  
Cook Co. Ill.

Annie G. Ordway and Virginia H. Andrews signed the North Family's Visitors Book in June 1892.

(Collection of Hancock Shaker Village, #337)

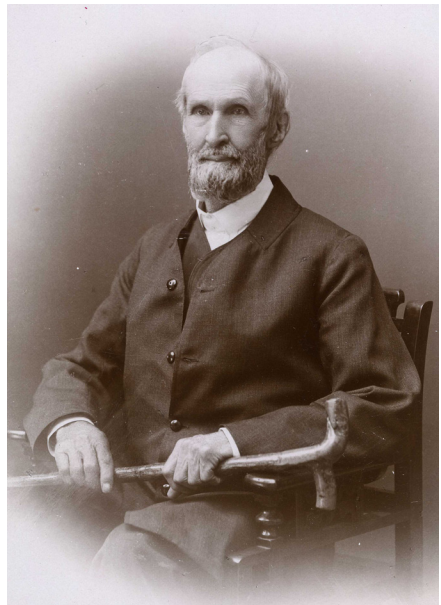
of missteps by the leadership at the North Family that would lead to an embarrassing severance from the increasingly erratic Dr. Teed.

A self-congratulatory summary of Ordway and Andrews's visit was published in the August 1892 issue of *The Manifesto*:

North Family.... Recently we have enjoyed a very pleasant and profitable visit with the two leading sisters of the Koreshan Unity: Annie G. Ordway and Virginia Andrews. Very interesting inasmuch as all doubt as to the virgin celibate character of the members of the Unity is removed, and a Christian communistic relation maintained: they living the same lives as do all true members of our Shaker Communities. Profitable, because we felt a renewed baptism of courage, hope and life; an inspiration that prompted to more zeal in the spiritual work of God. Their theology being based upon an entirely new system of astronomy, overthrowing all our preconceived ideas, was well nigh enough to turn the balance against them. But coming to a knowledge of their lives by personal contact, (Br. Benjamin Gates having visited them in their own home in Chicago and now leading their sisters visiting our home,) the prejudice has been removed, and we feel free to look into and examine their theology and cosmogony; knowing that the truth will in the end prevail. It is a matter for heart-felt gratitude that we have no cast-iron creed to keep the soul from growing into a more perfect knowledge of the truth continually.

Above all peoples should we be the most free, and the most willing to acknowledge truth wherever it is manifested. Is there any other way we can come in unity of faith unto perfect men and women, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?<sup>25</sup>

The Shakers would soon come to regret their openness to the Koreshans; however, for the moment, the visit of these Koreshan sisters clearly served its purpose of furthering the merger of the two communal societies. A letter from Elder Frederick Evans to Dr. Teed, dated July 4, 1892, and later reprinted in *The Manifesto*, offers an interesting insight into Teed's character from one of the most liberal Shaker leaders. Referencing the certificate granted Ordway and Andrews, Evans wrote: "This will make Cyrus and Annie the Leaders and Elders of the New Order." The meaning of this is nebulous, as Teed was not mentioned in the certificate. The "New Order" referred to is equally ill-defined, perhaps a shrewd calculation on the part of Evans. Evans continued in a surprisingly candid vein: "I did stand in some little doubt, not as to whether you had received a call of the Spirit to gather a prepared people upon the foundation of the testimony of Christ's Second Appearing in the female order of humanity, but as to the *use* you would make of it. Jesus said, 'all who came before me were thieves and robbers,' by which expression, we understand that from Moses to John the Baptist ... all had more or less taken the gift of the spirit to make of themselves some 'great one,' building up themselves as did Moses." Evans continued, "The wonderful document you have sent for us to sign, clears up the little doubt and plainly shows you as a Christian and that it is not your intention to 'set up a post by God's post' and to build up *yourself*." Evans cites Teed's similar preaching on celibacy and community of goods, then



Frederick W. Evans (1808-1893), elder of the North Family, Mt. Lebanon, N.Y. (Collection of Hancock Shaker Village)



questions what the Shakers have to gain from a merger with the Koreshans, stating: “These things the Shakers have preached and practiced for the last one hundred years; and now as a progressive people ask ‘what lack I yet?’” Evans then challenges the Koreshans to become vegetarians, abstain from alcohol and tobacco, and hold work as religious worship. He holds as examples of Shaker failing the inability to maintain celibate converts to work the large Shaker landholdings, thus rendering the Shakers land-poor and beholden to hired workers. Evans hopes the Koreshans, in advancing the greater spiritual work of both groups, “to be as much better than that in the old Societies of Shakers as they can attain unto.”<sup>26</sup>

Back in Chicago, Teed was using his relationship with the Shakers to bolster his own position in the community. The July 16, 1892 issue of *The Flaming Sword* carried a staunch Shaker defense of the Koreshans, likely written by either Frederick Evans or Daniel Offord, entitled “A Voice from Shakerdom.” The Koreshans had been threatened by Chicagoans who were uneasy about their strange ideas and lifestyle.

How very singular it is for a highly civilized and Christianized people, in this wonderful day of grace, to be come excited and begin to ‘breathe out threatenings and slaughter’ against a little company of religionists. Persecution seems to be in the air, and after calling the Koreshans of Chicago a long list of bad names, these self-styled Christianized lambs are foolishly making ready to do violence to those whom they call the ‘wolves of Koresh.’ This is a queer exhibition of religion. It is, indeed, a change of base, and could only be brought out in this nineteenth century. Those who visit the World’s Fair will also want to see this wonder of the age.—Christian lambs devouring the Koresh wolves. The little company in Chicago who are under the charge of Dr. Teed and who at this time are unreasonably annoyed with the indignities of an ignorant class, have our sympathetic regard and a wish for their peace and prosperity. —The Shaker Manifesto<sup>27</sup>

This public advocacy for the Koreshans was the final step in what was to be the culmination of the events of early 1892—the union of the The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing and Koreshan Unity. The North Family journal recorded that on August 12th “Cyrus R Teed head of the Koreshan Unity arrives on the morning train.” On August 16th wealthy Koreshan convert Bertha Boomer arrived at Mount Lebanon. On the 19th the North Family journal records: “A notable meeting at which the Ministry, Cyrus & Bertha attended. It was the meeting of the Self Improvement Society. An organization of the young sisters of

the North Family.”<sup>28</sup>

Two days later on the Sabbath the entire Society gathered at the meetinghouse for a historic announcement. The event was reported by *The Albany Evening Argus*, which article was reprinted in *The Flaming Sword* for August 27, 1892.

Shakers and Koreshans

Their Union Announced at a Meeting in Mount Lebanon.

The Shaker meeting-house in this village was the scene of a notable and significant event Sunday afternoon. It had been announced that a special public meeting would be held at 2 p.m., and long before that hour the commodious edifice was filled in every part.... The venerable Elder Frederick W. Evans presided. In a brief introductory speech he announced that Dr. Cyrus R. Teed, of Chicago, who would deliver a lecture on “The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel,” was the leader of a body of people in Chicago, with branches in several other cities throughout the country, who were in complete union with the United Society of Believer’s in Christ’s Second Appearing (commonly called Shakers), on the three fundamental doctrines of order. Brother Daniel Offord then read a document in which Cyrus R. Teed and Victoria Gratia were formally recognized as members of the Shaker body and appointed to the eldership as Shepherd and Shepherdess of the Gynecato of the Koreshan Unity.

Dr. Teed then delivered the lecture of the afternoon on the great world’s problem of ‘The Fate of the Lost Ten Tribes.’ He showed ... that these Israelites ... had been merged in the Medeans, Persians and Assyrians, producing a mixed race ... which are represented by the Anglo-Saxon races of to-day. They were the leaven hidden in the three measures of meal by the woman. And in the fulfillment of prophecy, their merging into other races of the world exemplified a great law in the development of humanity. Christ was the archetype of a higher order of men, the child of a virgin. He rose from the tomb, triumphant over death, and at the last dematerialized his body on his departure to the spirit world, that he might send the Comforter to his disciples. In all this he exemplified man’s high possibilities, to be developed for the regeneration of the world.

Elder Frederick W. Evans closed the meeting with a few vigorous and well-chosen remarks, in which he pointed out that the evils now afflicting the world are the result of an irrational defiance of God’s law, and eulogized the superior common sense of the Shakers in their simple, pure lives. After the singing of Shaker inspirational songs by the singers

of the North Family, the meeting was dismissed. — Albany (N.Y.) Evening Journal.<sup>29</sup>

A number of other articles published in *The Flaming Sword* for August 20, 1892, also trumpeted the merger of the Koreshans and the Shakers. One particularly candid article (unsigned, but seemingly authored by Teed himself) alluded to the failed infiltration of the Harmony Society by the General Koresh of the White Horse Army (Teed), implying that it was somehow a distraction from the main goal — infiltrating Shakerism.

The Society of United Believers (Shakers) and Koreshans are henceforth one, and their interests one. This conjunction of interests is the beginning of an aggressive movement towards the dethronement of the power of sensualism in the world. The devil foresaw the dire calamity, to him, of such a conjunction, and concentrated his forces to prevent the present consummation. The Koreshan general proved more than a match for satan. While the feint was made as if to enter Economy, the devil's forces were centered there, General Koresh, of the White Horse Army, broke the enemy's lines and gained entrance at another point.

Koresh is at home in Shakerdom, and from Mount Lebanon sends greetings to his enemies. We find in the so-called Shaker body that deep and abiding consciousness of the Motherhood of God, which can only originate in the power of womanhood to set forth and maintain, in practical fruition, the life of chastity, putting forth the fruit, as she is the tree — in her virgin integrity — of life.

Mother Ann Lee performed a marvellous work when she instituted the effort to restore the church and bring again the primitive state. She has made it possible, through one hundred years of chastity in her followers, for the ark of regeneration to be established.<sup>30</sup>

In the same issue, Charles J. McLaughlin, the managing editor of *The Flaming Sword*, contributed another article entitled “An Auspicious Event” which summarizes, from the Koreshan point of view, the meaning and ramifications of the events that had recently unfolded at Mount Lebanon.

Readers probably noted in our last issue, an interesting account of the visit of the President and Secretary of the Society Arch-Triumphant of the Koreshan Unity to the Mount Lebanon, N.Y., Shaker Community.... The visit was fraught with the greatest importance to Koreshanity by reason of the fact that Annie G. Ordway and Virginia H. Andrews were received by the Elders and Eldresses of the Mount Lebanon Society of United Believers (Shakers), in behalf of the Society, into full fellowship, Annie G. Ordway, President of the Society Arch-Triumphant, being ordained

by them to the ministry of the higher life (as promulgated and practiced both by the so-called Shakers and the body of Koreshans), under the title Victoria Gratia, Shepherdess of the Koreshan Unity. The headstone of the new system of thought, destined to revolutionize the world, has now been brought forth and the first step taken toward the establishment of a nucleus, which, by theocracial impregnation, will grow into a mighty empire, the kingdom of righteousness in earth. In it will be blended all of the celibate bodies now existing in America. The ordination of Victoria Gratia, accompanied by confession to Eldress Anna [White], binds the Shaker society to the Koreshan Unity with an indissoluble bond of love and fellowship. It is the forerunner of that inevitable consolidation of the two bodies which the coming social crisis will speedily necessitate, in order that a place of refuge and a great industrial system may be established to which the masses may flee in their time of sore distress. Upon her return from Mt. Lebanon, our newly ordained Shepherdess gave the Society Arch-Triumphant a glowing account of the harmony, prosperity, purity and power existing among the Lebanon Shakers, and of their love and good wishes for the success and spiritual advancement of the Koreshan Unity. With the potency of mother Ann thus blended with Koreshanity, the times are truly auspicious for the implantation of the divine seed that shall finally bring forth that immaculate woman, the Minerva, who will personify the final culmination of a cycle's evolution and of woman's triumph over sexual thralldom. —C.J.M.<sup>31</sup>

The public's reaction to the news of the Koreshans and Shakers uniting is largely unknown. Nothing tangible seems to have occurred in the wake of the grandiose titles given the Koreshans or the publication of the congratulatory paeans of the Koreshan-Shaker mutual admiration society. The Shakers continued to contribute articles to *The Flaming Sword*, but no Koreshans took up residence at Mount Lebanon, and certainly no Shakers moved to Chicago. In the September 17, 1892, issue of *The Flaming Sword* an article appeared called "Shakers and Koreshans" which once more outlined the Shakers preparatory work towards the final regeneration of mankind possible through Koreshanity. However, in the same issue there appears an article entitled "The Celibate Life as Applied to Immortality." It is in this article that we see the first inkling of the issue that would drive the Koreshans and Shakers apart, i.e., human immortality. In the article the anonymous author (probably Teed) posits: "Ann Lee was an incomplete incarnation of the Motherhood. Through the body of Believers she was enabled to inaugurate, in the natural, the baptism of her Messenger and Shepherd, that through his high office she might reach a complete

re-incarnation, and stand forth the conservator and utilizer of the vital essences, and become the Mother of the sons of God. The science of this transformation is in the hand of the Shepherd of Koreshanity, installed such by the Shaker body.”<sup>32</sup>

Evidently the Shakers also recognized the problems inherent in partnering with Teed. In the October 1892 issue of *The Manifesto* Elder Frederick Evans indulged in an editorial column about the Koreshans. Evans first recognized the Koreshans’ mission and wished them success, but soon he established boundaries to differentiate the groups, stating: “The Koreshans are not Shakers in the exact definition of the word Shaker. They accept the foundation principles of Believers, Celibacy, community of goods, peace, temperance adding thereunto vegetarianism. As we understand the Koreshans do not come under the direct Leadership of the Shakers, and the Elders newly appointed are Elders only of the Koreshan Unity.” Evans quotes a passage from an article in *The Flaming Sword* for August 13, 1892 that stated: “Koreshanity has an outer court, I do not know that Shakerism has. The Shakers are a glorious people.... Koreshanity is the opening of another stage of evolution beyond Shakerism, but in no way conflicts with it. In fact we regard ourselves as the outcome of the old celibate bodies of the United States, the principal one of which is Shakerism.” Responding to this passage Evans writes: “If Koreshanity is beyond Shakerism, it certainly is not Shakerism, but if this new body can manifest a testimony that will more effectually separate them from the children of this world ... they are well worthy to go on victoriously, while we as Brother and Sisters can wish them Godspeed.” After this statement, tantamount to a “good riddance,” Evans remarks in a wonderful aside: “The theology of the Koreshans is more peculiar, if possible, than is that of the Shakers, and certainly quite unlike it. But as theology is generally very plentiful and cheap, this need not make much difference.” Finally, Evans quotes Galatians 6:7-8 in a veiled reference to Teed, and possibly his new teachings on the possibility of immortality and corporeal resurrection: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Evans warns, “To lose this testimony we lose our right to an entrance into the Holy City, and in our lukewarmness are in danger of being cast out from the presence of our God.”<sup>33</sup>

*The Flaming Sword* of October 15, 1892 carried a reply to Evans from Teed entitled “What Constitutes a Shaker?” In this lengthy article

Teed addresses the question of “the extent, religious and otherwise, of our relationship. This question is suggested by a recent editorial in *The Manifesto*, in which there seemed to us an indulgence in a little subtle sarcasm. I refer to the statement that ‘Koreshans are not Shakers.’ ... If a membership with our Shaker brethren does not constitute us Shakers, then we freely admit we have something to learn.” Teed then attempts to draw an allusion between the name “Shakers” and a tenet of Koreshan faith, writing: “A common axiom of the Koreshan Unity declares that every atom of matter, through agitation, may be transubstantiated to energy.... Spirit (energy) has its origin in the agitation or shaking of matter. This is an eternal law. The power exhibited through the religious exercises of the Society of United Believers is but the precursor of that final concentration of vibratory energy, which, focalizing in the central cell of the psychic dynamo, will repeat in a tenfold ratio the aggregation of force which culminated in the theocrases of Enoch, Elijah, and Jesus.” After this bit of gobbledygook Teed asserts, “Celibacy is operative in the retention of the forces of regeneration. The agitation of the Shakers is the power of the spirit to transubstantiate the substances of natural generation to the higher energies of spiritual regeneration. This peculiar characteristic of the Shaker people is regarded by the Koreshans as an essential concomitant of conditions and demands for the metamorphosis of the propagative substance of our domain to the appropriations of a higher sphere.” Here Teed uses alchemical language to frame Shaker celibacy as a reagent of sorts in a divine “chemical” reaction that will enable both the Shaker and Koreshans realize their metaphysical goals, nebulous as they might be. Teed then transitions to more temporal concerns, stating that: “Our body [the united Shakers and Koreshans] should control the industrial and commercial dominion of the world.... Let us proceed without delay to locate an industrial plant, to open some essential manufacturies, and employ men to perform our work upon terms equally favorable with other corporations.” Teed closes by presumptuously calling on the Shakers to be more proactive in seeking to change the world around them: “Awake, thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead; let the world know of your existence, and feel your power! Not only let the Shakers shake themselves, but shake the world, till a gaping earth shall swallow all who persistently disobey the laws of life.”<sup>34</sup>

Teed’s abstract theology, which Evans had subtly mocked, had grown even stranger by this time, integrating ideas that brought it farther away

from Shakerism, and thereby gradually alienating the Shakers from sympathy with the Koreshans. Moreover, the Shakers, even the reform-minded North Family, had neither the interest or financial resources to embark upon a manufacturing enterprise such as the one Teed proposed.

The North Family's journal records for November 13, 1892: "In the evening a convention was held at the North Family in regard to the Koreshans & Cyrus Teed, a very remarkable gathering."<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, surviving manuscript records fail to reveal the substance of that meeting. However, a telling item in the December 1892 issue of *The Manifesto* reveals the Shakers' growing skepticism of Teed and his aims:

'Our Confederation'—whatever that may mean,—as hinted at in the 'Flaming Sword,' may need to be analyzed if such a thing exists. I wonder if those who have eyes to see on one side, can see equally as well on the other, and then note if this does not sound like 'an indulgence in a little, subtle sarcasm? If any of the celibate bodies of the present, imagine, and some of them seem to, that their condition, which is only a stepping stone,\* \* \* to the glorious state of the sons of God,\* \* \* is the ideal one, they are doomed like the apostate churches to be greatly disappointed in the near future.'<sup>36</sup>

This item was likely written by either Frederick Evans or Daniel Offord. Evans was released as elder at the North Family on November 24, 1892, an event that marked the end of his long and powerful dominance of the public's perception of Shakerism. Interestingly, a separate item in *The Manifesto* for December reports favorably on the installation of a "fourteen inch Motor of our Koreshan friends."

Teed was not about to give up on his plans for the Shakers, or the Harmony Society, without a fight. *The Flaming Sword* for October 15, 1892, carried an article entitled "The Economites" that accused the former trustees of the Harmony Society of taking better financial care of their hired labor than of the actual members of the Society. Teed praises the new leadership of young trustee and Teed ally, John S. Duss, asserting:

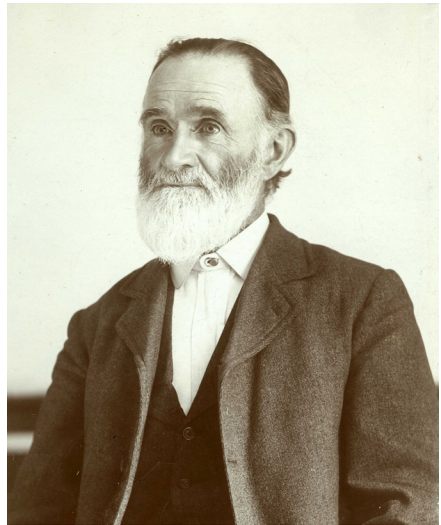
There is some hope for the Economites when a young man, with the intelligence, moral courage and fidelity to trust, exhibited in the character of the Economite trustee, will take the bull by the horns and initiate a restoration of the principles originally constituting the foundation and bulwark of communistic life. Fat, sleek aliens have vitiated the practices, and retarded the growth of the society about as long as the institution can carry the load. Just at this time, while the people interested are acting upon the injunction of a Pittsburg paper to "Keep your eye on Economy,"



it would be well for them to read a prophecy concerning the future of the society made by Teed, and published in New York about twelve years ago. It looks as if the Lord was confirming the word of his servant.

Teed's megalomania had reached new heights with this last assertion, as if he were not a "fat, sleek alien" in his own relationship to the Harmony Society. A similar public relations item published in *The Flaming Sword* for November 19, 1892, stated: "The work of the commercial association of Koreshanity and the Society of United Believers goes bravely on."<sup>37</sup> In fact, no such association seems to have ever begun as the Shakers slowly awakened to Teed's true character.

On November 16, 1892, Daniel Offord penned a letter to Teed with three questions that had arisen among the Shakers regarding Teed's core beliefs. The first of these questions referenced a previously published article of Teed's in *The Flaming Sword* for September 10, 1892, entitled "Be fruitful and multiply." Offord asked: "Do you have any idea that, at some not far distant time, the men and women who may then compose the celibate bodies, will come together for the purpose of generating, *after the ordinary acception of that term*, the sons of God?" Offord was directly questioning Teed's commitment to the principle of celibacy, and the concept of a spiritual resurrection as believed by the Shakers. The second and third questions posed by Offord were, "Do you hold yourself to be the Messiah, equal, or superior, to Jesus Christ? And do you hold that Ann Lee was only a simple reformer ... without any new revelation, or divine inspiration?" Offord closed his letter by stating: "I propose that all controversy in relation to words cease, till each the other give evidence.... A short answer to these queries will be very acceptable. Your brother in kindest love."



Daniel Offord (1845-1911), who succeeded Frederick Evans as elder of the North Family  
(Collection of Hancock Shaker Village)



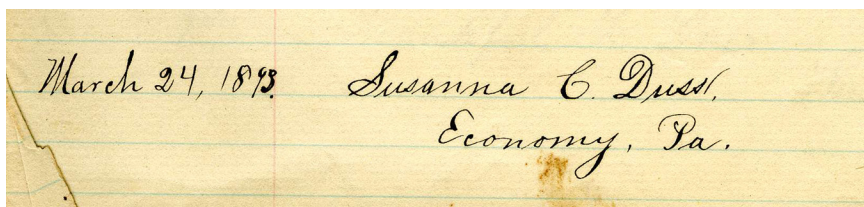
## Letter from Daniel Offord, with Reply by Koresh.

NORTH FAMILY, MOUNT LEBANON, COLUMBIA CO.,  
N. Y., Nov. 16, 1892.

Beloved Brother Cyrus:—In the **FLAMING SWORD** of September 10, is an article entitled, “Be fruitful and multiply.” At the time of its issue I felt very much impressed to write to you, but press of business hindered. Now, at the present time, there is considerable inquiry among some of our people as to your *interior meaning*. We have always associated the command, “Be fruitful and multiply,” with the excuse to gratify the sensual animal propensities, for the reason that when we advocate the celibate life, as taught and lived by Jesus, many bring up the great command, “Be fruitful and multiply,” as a reason for their not living as Jesus did. We are a common people, and like, as much as possible, in our use of words, to attach the meaning that is in the understanding of common people, and that can be found in the ordinary dictionary. When words are used with other meaning than this, we have to study considerably to know what the writer really does mean. For instance, in the use of the word marriage, we have taken Webster’s definition: “The legal union of a man and a woman for life.”

Teed answered, and issued both Offord’s original letter and his reply in a pamphlet.<sup>38</sup> First Teed affirmed, “We emphatically state that when God commanded the original Adamic man ‘To increase, and multiply and replenish the earth,’ that had no reference to sensual generation....

One of the fundamental doctrines of Koreshanity is that, at no time, and under no circumstances, past, present or future, is it in the purpose of God ever to encourage the contact of sex naturally and sensually. We advocate the doctrine of sexual purity in chastity and celibacy.” On this principle the Koreshans and the Shakers could agree. To Offord’s question about Teed’s status as a messiah Teed answered: “Our idea of Messiah is an authoritative teacher, or one who has the right to teach by the authority of having the truth.” Teed compared his messianic authority to that of Ann Lee, and based it in part upon the Shakers’ own special recognition of his spiritual abilities: “Ann Lee was anointed. She received her authority from the Lord. I am anointed, and because the Shaker authority regard me as called of God to preach the gospel of purity, they anointed me through their natural anointing power, as they were the channel of my anointing through the spiritual.” This was a shrewd maneuver on Teed’s part, for if his own authority could be questioned, then could not also that of the Shakers? He then inserted verbatim the certificate issued him by the Ministry at Mount Lebanon: “Know all men by these presents: that Cyrus R. Teed ... is a recognized brother in full membership, and fellow of the United Society of Believers (called Shakers), and that, by the authority of the appointing power of our body, and endorsed by our Ministry, he is hereby anointed in confirmation of his authority to preach the everlasting gospel of purity and the presence of the Lord in the revelation of the Motherhood of God.” Before addressing Offord’s question as to his regard for Ann Lee, Teed made one simple, and for the Shakers highly controversial point, writing: “I do *not* believe that the superior of, nor equal to, Jesus the Christ, ever did or does live. When the process of overcoming is complete, we know we shall be like him; heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That equality of life is not yet attained.” In that statement Teed invalidated two key Shaker beliefs: the coequal indwelling of the Christ spirit in Jesus the Christ as well as Ann Lee, and the “Christ life” lead by every Believer who had confessed their sins. These differences would not bode well for the union of the Koreshans and Shakers. To Offord’s final question about whether the Koreshans regarded Ann Lee as only a “simple reformer,” Teed replied that he regarded Ann Lee as “the chosen Christ of God’s Motherhood, as far above the ordinary reformer as virtue is above profanation, and that she moves in the median line of reincarnation to her perfect state as the Mother Lord. We behold her as the center of the New Jerusalem, the astral center, whose brilliancy outshines every other glory

A photograph of a handwritten entry on a piece of aged, yellowed paper with faint horizontal lines. The text is written in a cursive script. On the left, the date "March 24, 1893." is written. To the right of the date, the name "Susanna C. Duss," is written on the first line, and "Economy, Pa." is written on the second line. There is a small brown stain on the paper near the bottom right of the text.

Susanna C. Duss, wife of Harmony Society trustee John S. Duss, signed the North Family's Visitors Book in March 1895.  
(Collection of Hancock Shaker Village, #337)

now manifest in the celestial heavens." Aside from the Koreshan gibberish at the end of this passage Teed has revealed two key points: that Ann Lee was/is not fully evolved in a spiritual sense, and that she is still progressing towards an undefined "reincarnation." This doctrine of reincarnation, or immortality, would be the final flash point for the Shakers and Koreshans.

More mundane interactions continued between the two groups with the December 1892 issue of *The Manifesto* reporting from Mount Lebanon's North Family: "We have our Separator set up, and in fine working order. We obtained a fourteen inch Motor of our Koreshan friends, set it up temporarily to prove it on the Separator, and found we had more than double the power we needed."<sup>39</sup> The North Family's Book of Records records the arrival on March 23, 1893, of "Bertha Boomer of Chicago and Susie Duss of Economy, PA." Susie Duss was the wife of Harmony Society trustee and Teed supporter John S. Duss.

Elder Frederick Evans, who had initially encouraged the merger of the two groups, passed away on March 6, 1893. Judging by his writings Evans had slowly grown more wary of Teed's true character. Cyrus Teed himself came to Mount Lebanon on April 13th, the Book of Records stating: "Cyrus Teed here - works to make arrangements to move some 70-80 of his members out to Ohio."<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately nothing else has come to light about this particular visit.

In the July 15, 1893 issue of *The Flaming Sword* an article appeared under the title "Immortalized." Likely authored by Teed, the article begins with an explanation of the immortality achieved by Jesus through "perfection of character," arguing that "he rendered his flesh immortal and appeared after his resurrection not as a spirit but as a tangible, material form, in a body so transcendently immaculate that it could not pass to corruptible dissolution." Teed argues that Jesus was the first to show the world it was possible to transmute fleshly matter into incorruptible spirit manifest in

physical form, thus rendering an individual immortal. The article further relates that “Ann Lee, the foundress of the Society of Shakers, passed to a corruptible dissolution of the body, but having begun the struggle of the purification of the flesh, and continuing that struggle in the spirit, she has attained the mastery and is about to come forth reincarnate in the immaculate Motherhood.”<sup>41</sup> For the Shakers, even those as progressive as Mount Lebanon’s North Family, this was going too far.

A two part response to “Immortalized” was published in the September 1893 issue of *The Manifesto*. The first part, entitled “Comments on ‘Immortalized,’” was anonymous. It begins with a scathing critique of the article calling it “so singularly narrow and unspiritual when compared with the magnificence and depth of our soul-saving faith, that it would invite some remarks even if its conclusions concerning Mother Ann were correct and acceptable.” The author continues: “It is a curious fact that no ethics or religion have as yet been able to bring the body to the perfection that is produced by the science of the pugilists. It is veritable nonsense to speak of one having received an illumination of immortal thoughts while his body, brain, and surroundings are undergoing the disintegration which is but a natural process of decay?... While we believe that all souls are immortal we would not think that any are celestially immortalized that merely overcame corruption or depravity; purity and holiness must be added and then perfected in the fear, which is the sacred love of God.”<sup>42</sup>

The second part of the response was authored by Daniel Offord, and titled simply “Immortalized.” Offord begins by further distancing the Shakers from the Koreshans by stating: “On account of our extending union and fellowship to the leaders of that paper [*The Flaming Sword*] to preach the gospel of purity, and accepting them as members of the North family, on condition that they live out in daily practice the fundamental principles of our Order ... some might think that we endorse the theological statements and ideas set forth in the Flaming Sword. We do nothing of the kind, and especially we do not in the article referred to, and some previous ones.” Offord continues: “That Ann Lee is about to come forth re-incarnated in the immaculate Motherhood, and by that means the Sons of God will come forth as biune beings, is no part of the faith of the Shaker Order. We become the Sons and Daughters of God, by doing in all things the will of our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother, just as Jesus became the Son of God, and Ann the Daughter of God. There has been in the last century, a number of individuals who believe they



had attained to a knowledge whereby their mortal bodies would be come immortal; but where are they now? Just where all the other mortal bodies *are*, and where all human bodies that are now in existence will be sooner or later.”<sup>43</sup>

Teed replied to these two essays in one final salvo in *The Flaming Sword* for September 2, 1893. His tone has changed from one of grandiose allegory to patronizing condescension. It is clear that he wished to communicate that his patience with the Shakers was near an end, and that it was *they* who must embrace and join with him for the good of both the Shakers and humanity in general.

The *Manifesto* a neat little monthly published at East Canterbury, N.H., in the interests of the Shaker body, furnishes some evidence, in the last number, of waking up.

There is enough force in the Shaker body to revolutionize the world, providing it will manifest religious life enough to let the world know it exists. If the Flaming Sword has done nothing else for the Shakers, it has revived the impression among them that they exist; and if it can do a little more for them, by convincing them that they exist for the world and not for themselves, we will be the more deeply gratified. The world at large scarcely knows of the existence of the Shakers, except in a commercial way, and this, of course, is always favorable to the Shakers. As a religious body they have one great thing to learn, — that the universe did not begin with Mother Ann, nor will it end with her. — *Selah*...

“We have reason to believe,” says the *Manifesto*, “that his [Jesus’] body was not corrupted by disease, nor by generation, and as far as our requirements extend, that would be all the immaculate flesh we could see any use in. As to the ‘personality, name, form, and function of the man-god that stood forth from the grave,’ they have as little bearing on the soul’s travail as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost doctrine has.” If the gospel of Jesus Christ is as senseless as the editor of the *Manifesto* declares it to be, we cannot see how the gospel of Ann Lee, professedly founded upon the biblical fact of the Messiahship of Jesus, is any improvement. Jesus passed out of this world alive, without the corruption of the flesh; Ann Lee did not. The body of the Lord Jesus did not see corruption in the grave; the body of Ann Lee did. This is a distinction with a decided difference; and it is upon this difference that we predicate the superiority of the life and power of Jesus over that of Ann Lee. In the descent of the Christ into the into and through the race which he came to regenerate (reproduce), the form of Ann Lee was taken, and through this partial embodiment one great step was made in the preparation for the final establishment of the kingdom of righteousness.

The Shaker body is demonstrating the verification of the possibility of lighting a candle and placing it under a bushel; for, while claiming the greatest light, it religiously excludes itself from the world, and is apparently doing nothing to let its light shine. We think if any people on the face of the earth has reason to be ashamed of its position, that people is the Shaker body. God works through instrumentality; and when his work does not specifically exhibit itself, it is because the instrument is not furnished for his use. The Shakers have made money; they have become rich, and are at ease in Zion. This is wrong. Buckle on the armor, brethren, and let your works become manifest to the world. If you have the best religion in the world, let the world have some public exhibition of it.

The Shakers are a good people; they could be better.

"Immortalized," by Daniel Offord heads another article in the *Manifesto*. He says, "This is the heading of an article ... some might think that we endorse the theological statements and ideas set forth in the Flaming Sword." Not when these "some" learn the facts that they do not endorse one another's theological statements. Many of the Shakers believe in, and accept, the doctrine of re-embodiment, while come of the older members do not like or endorse the doctrine. It is taking root among them, and all the restrictions and creedal strait-jackets possible to apply cannot prevent the truth from making headway among the progressive Shakers. The non-progressive will, by and by, step down and out.

'In the article referred to,' says Brother Daniel, "the *immortal flesh* is spoken of." Immortal, according to Webster, 'Having no principle of alteration or corruption; exempt from death, having life or being that shall never end.' There has been no evidence or proof given, that *my* rational understanding can accept, of any human body or flesh becoming immortal. If the body of Enoch, Elijah, or Jesus became so, it must be in existence today. If it is not in existence, then it is not immortal." This last is a clincher, thinks the Elder. Elder Daniel is laboring under the great and common mistake, that an atom of matter cannot be converted into spirit.

[quoting *The Manifesto*] "There has been in the last century, a number of individuals who believe they had attained to a knowledge whereby their mortal bodies would be come immortal; but where are they now? Just where all the other mortal bodies *are*, and where all human bodies that are now in existence will be sooner or later." It makes no difference if there have been ten thousand who believed it, but did not possess the knowledge and are dead; that does not alter the fact that Jesus attained to it, and, by virtue of such attainment, went out alive. . . . The law is

discovered; and it would be as well for Elder Daniel to stop and think, as for him to ask others to think upon and investigate the claims of the Shakers.

The theology of Koreshanity is more than a “*soul-saving*” religion,—employing the term *soul-saving* as usually understood. It was the man that was lost; it is the man that must be saved. This includes the body as well as the soul (*psyche*) as well as the spirit (*pneuma*). The *psyche*, *pneuma* and *soma* are included in a full salvation. The Shakers have not learned this; they will before they get through with the process of salvation. “This *mortal* shall put on *immortality*, and this *corruptible* put on *incorruption*.” This body will be transformed to immortality, else there is no truth in the Bible; and if the Bible be not true, and is the record and the testimony of Jesus the Christ be not true, then we have no use for Ann Lee or her theology. If her theology is here to set aside and obscure the gospel of Jesus, then of course we do not desire any of it. Jesus corroborated the testimony of Moses and the prophets; if their testimony be not true, then that of Jesus is not, for he came to fulfil the law (Moses) and the prophets. If Ann Lee did not come to corroborate the testimony of Jesus, and therefore that of the prophets, then we will leave her out of ours.

We love the Shakers, but they have some things to learn, among which is the fact, that it is possible for one or many to arise in this world, and in this age, even wiser than Mother Ann. We will despise not the day of small things.<sup>44</sup>

With this dismissive article Teed broke off any further serious attempts to merge the Koreshans and the Shakers. In the end, the Koreshan belief in physical reincarnation—so at odds with the Shaker concept of spiritual resurrection—proved to be the decisive point in ending the proposed combination of the two groups. Teed moved most of his followers to Florida by 1894, and it seems that serious theological debate between the Shakers and Koreshans came to an end. *The Manifesto* continued to run ads for *The Flaming Sword* until March of 1894. In a tragic yet somewhat humorous side note, Charles J. McLaughlin, the managing editor of the *The Flaming Sword*, sought refuge at Mount Lebanon’s North Family on September 5, 1894. Upon his arrival the thirty-two year old was described as “an exceedingly frail person.”<sup>45</sup>

With the 1896 establishment of the Shaker family at Narcoossee, Florida, known as “Olive Branch,” the Shakers continued to keep tabs on the developments of the Koreshan Unity at Estero, Florida. A much longer sequel to this paper could be written on the continuing relationship

between the Shakers and Koreshans in Florida. Many of Shaker elder Ezra Stewart's letters from Florida to Mount Lebanon contain accounts of the strange doings at Estero.

A brief correspondence between Brother Levi Shaw and one Samuel Thacher of Narcissa, Pennsylvania sheds some final light on Teed's true intentions in dealing with the North Family at Mount Lebanon. Unsurprisingly they revolved around money.

Narcissa, Penna 5/9/1900

Mr. Levi Shaw,  
Dear Sir,

Kindly inform me whether Cyrus R. Teed of Chicago is in anyway connected with your institution?

I have always regarded the Shakers as a pure christian people but if such a man as mentioned above is in any way recognized by the Shakers I feel very sorry for them as I know this man "through and through."

Kindly let me hear from you and oblige  
Samuel A. Thacher



Levi Shaw (1819-1908)  
(Collection of Hancock Shaker Village)

— ◇ — ◇ —

May 14, 1900  
Samuel Thacher  
Narcissa  
Montgomery Co., Pa.

Esteemed Friend- In answer to your inquiry of 9th inst. concerning Cyrus R. Teed of Chicago will say that he and his people are in no way whatever connected with our Society. He visited Mt. Lebanon in the year 1892 accepted of our principles and professed to unite with us but we soon perceived his real object for doing so was for money — some "spare cash was all he hustled for" instead of the truth, when denied this he denounced us in bitter accusations and since then we have had no further communication with him or any of his followers. We think "Koreshans History" in April No. of The Temple of Health show's up where they



are and whither they are drifting. All things not based upon Truth must eventually pass away for Truth alone must stand. Shakers have been in the sifting work for 125 years and are still at it. Wolves in sheeps clothing not infrequently seek for admittance but the sifting process proves too much for them and they are only to glad to sneak away before their real character is known

[Levi Shaw].



Narcissa, Montgomery Co. Pa

May 18th 1900

My Esteemed Friend.

Levi Shaw.

Dear Sir.

I thank you kindly for your reply to my letter...

You refer me to the article in the April number of the "Temple of Health" which I wrote, This man Teed has proved himself on several occasions to be a "Knave." I know him pretty well and he fears my pen. He broke up my family in Chicago and I am aiming to break up his nefarious and blasphemous business I "used him up" in Florida, he is looked upon by the people in the vicinity of where his now dwindled camp is located as a Lunatic and Fraud. The Government took the Estero P.O. away from them as it was proven to have been obtained by fraudulent signatures. When I went to Estero in 1895 the Camp consisted of 130 people, there are now about 20 there half starved, half clothed and half witted, Teed never goes there any more he is affraid of certain parties. I think his "string end" is nearly reached in Chicago, he manages to half feed a few people on the proceeds of his printing office he has a "Sharp Jew" named Silverfriend who solicits Job printing from Grocers, Butchers &c. (cards, envelopes, bill heads and circulars) this keeps him afloat with his head just above water. His fool paper does not pay any profit there are not enough fools of his brand to subscribe to it.

Kindly let me know in what way he tried his "game" on you? as I am "writing him up" Your name shall not be used in any way whatsoever. Do you not think Teed a blasphemer? I do and have told him he was a "Blaspheming Knave." Mrs Ordway is not "all there." She and Teed have "scraps" occasionally, They kiss and make up, I do not think he is as pure as rain water direct from the clouds.

Teed is very arbitrary and has a high temper. What do you think of his reincarnations?

I should like to have any printed matter pertaining to your

order—which you have distribution—I have taken quite an interest in ascertaining more about your society—I know you to be a pure good people, ever since I can remember hearing of you years ago.

Hoping to soon hear from you I remain  
truly yours  
Samuel A. Thacher  
Narcissa  
Penna.

Do you accept the Divinity of Christ?

————— ◇ ————— ◇ —————

Germantown. July 7th 1900

My Esteemed Friend.

Levi Shaw.

Your welcome favor of 5/22 received. . .

You were very fortunate not to let that vile blasphemer get 28.000 from you, you would never see 28 cents of it, I am glad that you saw the man's hypocrisy, truthfully speaking he is really the most complete hypocrite I ever knew or heard tell of. He is a fraud and impostor, makes his living by playing sharp games under the cloak of religion He belongs in Joliet (Illinois State Prison) for defrauding poor and unsuspecting dupes.

I prize your beautiful letters highly. I am exposing the "Fraud" and his blasphemous dogma in every section of country he poisons, I have broken him up in Florida by exposing his nefarious conduct.

truly yours

Samuel A. Thacher

Narcissa

Montgomery Co. Penna.

Do you not consider Teed a blasphemer? I can't make anything else of one who says he is Christ."<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately the response to Thacher's last letter, if there was one, has not been located. The sad fate of Charles J. McLaughlin, Teed's one-time associate and managing editor of *The Flaming Sword*, puts a final cap on this story: "September 7, 1912- Charles J. McLaughlin is reported to be out of his head, having acted queer for a long time. He was gardner [*sic*] at No. Family Lebanon N.Y."<sup>47</sup>

## Notes

1. A number of books and articles have focused on the Shakers' relations with other communal groups: Peter Hoehnle, "Communal Bonds: Contact Between the Amana Society and Other Communal Groups, 1843-1932," *Communal Societies* 20 (2000): 59-80, and John E. Norton, "From Bishop Hill to Pleasant Hill: The Swedish Shakers Experience," *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (Jan. 2008): 19-31.
2. See Robert F. W. Meader "The Shakers and the Mormons" *The Shaker Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1962): 83-96.
3. See Stephen Paterwic, "The Shaker Peace Conference of 1905: Witness and Hope at the North Family of Mount Lebanon," *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (April 2008): 58.
4. James E. Landing, "Cyrus Reed Teed and the Koreshan Unity," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. D. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 377-78.
5. Cyrus [Teed], "The Present and Immediate Future of the Harmony Society at Economy, Pa.," *Supplement to the Herald of the New Covenant* 1, no. 5 (August 20, 1880). This periodical is held at The Shaker Library, Sabbathday Lake, Maine.
6. Truth Seeker [D. M. Bennett], [untitled brief article], *The Shaker Manifesto* 9, no. 2 (February 1879): 26-27. It is unknown if the Shakers were aware of Teed prior to this notice, but the very fact that they published it indicates that they may have been. Additionally, a reference from December 1891 (given below) states the Shakers had previous correspondence with Teed. A search of relevant archives has not yielded any of these letters. The first evidence of interaction I have located between the Shakers and Teed are papers relating to the purchase of a water motor; one of Teed's patented inventions, by Shaker trustee Benjamin Gates in 1885. (These papers are in the collection of The Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York.)
7. Karl J. R. Arndt. *George Rapp's Successors and Material Heirs: 1847-1916* (Rutherford [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971), 172-73.
8. Theo. L. Pitt to Jacob Henrici, 14 November 1891, Arndt Papers, Box 18, Folder 89, Collection of Old Economy Village, Ambridge, Pa.
9. Koresh [Cyrus Teed], "Economy and Dr. Teed", *The Flaming Sword*, January 16, 1892. Accessed at The Shaker Library, Sabbathday Lake, Me.
10. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20.
11. Records kept by order of the Church at New Lebanon, 1871-1905, 1916, New Lebanon, N.Y. Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, New York, ms. #9757.
12. "A Synopsis of Discourses Delivered by Dr. Cyrus Teed of the Koreshan Unity, on Dec. 11th and 13th, at Mount Lebanon, N.Y.," *The Manifesto* 22, no. 3 (March 1892), 66-68.
13. I wish to thank Steve Paterwic for providing information on the North Family covenant and probationary covenant that covers the years of Shaker-Koreshan interaction. The covenant is in the collection of The Shaker Museum and Library, #NOC 9776 13,358; the probationary covenant is held in The Shaker Library, Sabbathday Lake, Me.
14. "A Synopsis of Discourses Delivered by Dr. Cyrus Teed of the Koreshan Unity, on Dec. 11th and 13th, at Mount Lebanon, N.Y.," *The Manifesto* 22, no. 3 (March 1892),

66-68.

15. "Source and Fountain of the Potency upon which Depends the Organization of Coming Kingdom," *The Flaming Sword*, January 2, 1892.
16. "God the Lord Alternately Male and Female: The Sons of God, Neuter," *The Flaming Sword*, January 23, 1892.
17. "The Neuter Being," *The Flaming Sword*, January 30, 1892.
18. Alonzo Hollister, ["Dear Brother Cyrus"], *The Flaming Sword*, February 27, 1892.
19. Harriet Bullard, "Personal Diary," 1892, Mount Lebanon, N.Y., Collection of Hancock Shaker Village, ID # 1124.
20. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20.
21. Jacob Henrici, "The Economites," *The Flaming Sword*, March 5, 1892.
22. *The Flaming Sword*, March 5, 1892
23. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20.
24. *The Manifesto* 22, no. 10 (October 1892), 220.
25. D. O. [Daniel Offord], "Notes About Home: Mt Lebanon, N.Y.," *The Manifesto* 22, no. 8 (August 1892), 183.
26. Letter, Frederick W. Evans to Cyrus Teed, 4 July 1892, *The Manifesto* 22, no. 10 (October 1892), 220-22.
27. "A Voice from Shakerdom," *The Flaming Sword*, July 16, 1892, reprinted from *The Manifesto* 22, no. 7 (July 1892), 157.
28. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20.
29. *The Flaming Sword*, August 27, 1892.
30. *The Flaming Sword*, August 20, 1892.
31. Charles J. McLaughlin, "An Auspicious Event," *The Flaming Sword*, August 20, 1892.
32. "The Celibate Life as Applied to Immortality," *The Flaming Sword*, September 17, 1892.
33. Frederick W. Evans, [Untitled], *The Manifesto* 22, no. 10 (October 1892), 229-31.
34. Cyrus Teed, "What Constitutes a Shaker?," *The Flaming Sword*, October 15, 1892.
35. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20.
36. ["Our Confederation"], *The Manifesto* 22, no. 12 (December 1892), 280.
37. *The Flaming Sword*, November 19, 1892.
38. Daniel Offord. *Letter from Daniel Offord, with Reply by Kōresh*. (Chicago, 1893?).
39. D. O. [Daniel Offord], "Notes about Home. Mt. Lebanon, N.Y.," *The Manifesto* 22, no. 12 (December 1892), 281.
40. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20. Thanks to Steve Paterwic for these references.
41. "Immortalized," *The Flaming Sword*, July 15, 1893.
42. "Comments on 'Immortalized,'" *The Manifesto* 23, no. 9 (September 1893),
43. "Immortalized," *The Manifesto* 23, no. 9 (September 1893),
44. Cyrus Teed, *The Flaming Sword*, September 2, 1893.
45. [North Family Book of Records], 1814-1910, New Lebanon, [N.Y.]. New York Public Library Shaker Manuscript Collection, item #20. Thanks to Steve Paterwic for these

references.

46. SML Correspondence, Samuel A. Thacher to Levi Shaw, 1900. ML North Folder 230-20, ms. #10,325. The Shaker Museum and Library, Old Chatham, N.Y. I thank Jerry Grant for bringing these to my attention.
47. Hancock, Mass. Account and Day-book, 1837-1913. Call # 9784.H2, H235, ID # 370. Collection of Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Mass.